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I am Muslim, but Muslim is Not Me

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I am Muslim, but Muslim is not me

Asma Muhammad Nizami, a 23 year old Muslim woman from Minnesota faced a difficult time in her life in the year 2015. Ms. Nizami is someone that has always worn her hijab and thus one day when she was driving home, she stopped at a traffic light, she saw a man in the car next to hers gressed at her. The man then proceeds to rolled down his window and called her a “Muslim Bitch.” As she started to drive off, the man tailed her and nearly ran her off the road. Though many Muslims may not be a victim of hate crimes, few of us has face the content of terror and obsession and sometimes we feel that we or our family members might get hurt based on the way many Americans see Muslims.

Years after Tuesday, September 11, 2001, the top Google search worldwide was “Muslims/Islam” or “kill Muslims” (Lipka). Many people have heartless thought regarding Muslims and sometimes, many of these people share it on social media. Evidently, islamophobia is based on fear and perceptions that all Muslims are killers and that Muslims are taking over homes, jobs and the society. It is very common for the use of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) name be used against Muslims based on the way the media portray the religion. However, what many people do not know is that Muslims are one of the kindest people in the world. Yes, there are some that use the faith of Islam as an excuse to kill, but Islam do not based its ideology on that.

The title in the Daily Mail in January 2014 was “One in 10 babies in England is a Muslim: those practicing the religion could soon outnumber actively worshipping Christian's” (Davies). The article then showed an image of two Muslims women in their hijab; moments after the article was posted, there was a sense of anti-Muslim in the comment section. Being a Muslim and reading all the comments made me think of things that many people do not know especially

with the way Muslims are depicted. Islamophobia is something that has always been a problem in this society.

What about the other perspective? What about humanity and empathy? People are ready to jump to the conclusion and say that all Muslims are terrorists. For a presidency runner like Donald Trump to announce that he wants to ban all Muslims from entering the United States is shocking. Things like this are what help create an atmosphere that dehumanizes Muslims and encourages an anti-Muslim story. Certainly, such proclamations and accounts of Muslims also aid the creation of othering of communities and in particular may influence people's perceptions of them, particularly when combined with presidential candidates and media failing to correctly represent the true facts of each case.

Reading Asma Nizami's story has opened my eyes to what many Muslims have gone through after September 11th. After this devastating event, the searches for Islam and Muslims have increased. Although there is not much that can be done to stop Islamophobia, however, things that can be done is to increase cultural integration. If more Americans have Muslim neighbors, they will grasp the idea of not judging someone until they know them. Another thing we as a society can do is to vocalize the importance of acceptance and unreasoned hate, just as President Obama once stated in his speech. He expressed that "Muslims...are our friends...our neighbors, our co-workers, our sports heroes- and yes, they are our men and women in uniform, who are willing to die in defense of our country," (White House). He asked us, as a nation to refuse bias and not provide prejudiced viewpoints that paint Muslims in a negative way.

Refining media procedure and media duty on representing Islam and Muslims without prejudice or aim to trigger anti-Muslim discrimination, is very important. The media must provide an unbiased way of covering stories on Muslims. When I see hate crimes towards

Muslims, I worry about my fathers and brothers who are breaded and who wear their turban, I worry about my sisters and mothers who wear their hijab. Whenever I am in my hijab I often feel that people are watching me as if I am their target or someone they have to fear, but I am not. I am a Muslim, but Muslim is not me.

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